



Hon. Pedro R. Pierluisi
Statement for the Record- H.R. 3940
Committee on Natural Resources Markup
Wednesday, November 18, 2009

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

I am an original co-sponsor and strong supporter of this bill, introduced by my good friend and colleague Chairwoman Bordallo. This legislation would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to extend assistance to the Government of Guam, the Government of the United States Virgin Islands and the Government of American Samoa to facilitate a public education program on these territories' political status options.

I am a fierce believer in the right of the people of a territory to decide their political status from among the legally valid and politically realistic options. To be meaningful, the status choice process must be orderly, it must be fair and— most relevant to the legislation before us—it must be well-informed.

In his testimony at the Subcommittee hearing on this bill, the Director of the Office of Insular Affairs at the Department of the Interior made this point well. He said: “When the political status of a territory is under consideration, education of the public regarding the options available

to the people is of utmost importance. Only an educated populace can make informed decisions about its future.”

As my colleagues are aware, this Committee recently approved H.R. 2499, the Puerto Rico Democracy Act. In its report, the Committee stated as follows: “Lack of clear understanding in Puerto Rico regarding its viable, non-territorial status options is a chief reason for this legislation. A federal law would clarify the viable status options and thereby ensure that the self-determination process is well-informed and productive.”

The American citizens and nationals of Guam, the U.S.V.I. and American Samoa, like the American citizens of Puerto Rico, deserve to know what their real options are. The assistance authorized under this bill would simply educate the people on the status choices available to them.

Chairwoman Bordallo, I commend you on introducing this bill. And I urge my colleagues to vote yes.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.